

## Postscripts

by Jack Post

Captain Balfour and his 100 British regulars had escaped from the Old Colony militiamen at Marshfield, it was true, but that was no more than the beginning of the local activity in 1775. At Boston the troops of General Gage had been bottled up by the rag-tag colonials after the action at Lexington and Concord, and more patriots were joining the besiegers each week; but they had no organization, no equipment, and must be fed by contributions from the countryside.

In Duxbury on April 26, Joshua Hall, Ezra Weston, and Ichabod Alden were commissioned by the town to buy a cargo of corn from a boat tied up at Duck Hill, such cargo to be stored against time of need. Colonel Cotton's regiment took up station at Plymouth, for it was thought the British might attack the town. The 4 companies of Duxbury men marched around the shore to join the garrison, leaving a watch of 12 men on Captain's Hill, ready to set off beacon fires and rouse the countryside should the enemy appear.

In August a mounted messenger galloped in with word that 100 barrels of flour, a gift from patriot sympathizers in New York, were arriving at Sandwich and needed to be transported to Boston to help feed the army besieging the British. The barrels had been lightered by coasting schooner from Long Island Sound into Buzzards Bay, past the site of the ancient Pilgrim trading post at Aptuxet, to the head of navigation on the Monument River. They had been carried and dragged over the portage and down the Scusset River to Sandwich shore, where now the men of the Plymouth regiment could pick them up and convey them on the next leg of their journey to Boston.

To Captain Samuel Bradford of Duxbury fell the task of assembling 20 whaleboats and sailing them down to Sandwich to collect the flour, a trip that consumed 5 hours, not bad time since the only sails they had were blankets the men had brought along. The boats had to negotiate the bar at the mouth of the Scusset River, and several swamped when the strong easterly built up a difficult chop over the shallows, giving their crews an unexpected swim before they beached their craft near the piled barrels.

Next day, aided by a favoring westerly and a flood tide, the loaded vessels cleared the bar and enjoyed an easy run across Cape Cod Bay without sighting a single British sail and landed the precious barrel at Cohasset. From there they could be transported by oxcart to the patriot lines at Roxbury, safely out of the range of the English ships that patrolled the seas.

Other supplies were needed, too. George Partridge, the Duxbury representative to the Provincial Congress meeting in Watertown in

June, joined in the resolve that 13,000 coats be provided for non-commissioned officers and soldiers in the Massachusetts forces. The Congress had no money for such things, so quotas were set: 1,054 from Plymouth County, of which Duxbury's share was 44. Everything would be growing scarce with men away at war; so another resolution urged that no more sheep be killed than was absolutely necessary. At home, the Duxbury Committee of Safety dictated that no powder be expended, except to shoot destructive vermin.

Who knew what would happen? British Admiral Graves had threatened to blow Plymouth about the ears of its residents because of the fort that the militia was building; and now the regiment was being ordered to join the troops at Boston! The Committee of Correspondence petitioned the Provincial Congress to leave the men at home for protection, but they were sent away regardless.

Meanwhile, a fishing schooner owned by Elijah Sampson was captured and burned by the British right off Duxbury Beach. Her captain, Lewis Drew, seamen Ezra Howard, Joseph Delano, Zebdiel Delano, Abiathar Alden, and Zadock Bradford were transported to New York and confined in a reeking Jersey prison ship, in conditions so vile that all of them except Alden and Bradford died.

So the struggle continued in Duxbury and many another town, badly at first for the provincials who lacked everything but spirit and the determination never to submit to tyranny. 1776 would find their ideas focussed in the Declaration of Independence, and see the emergence of a new nation upon the earth which would bring fresh hope to the world.